Amendments to the Claims

1-44. (Canceled)

45. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the step of generating one or more combination codes comprises the steps of:

generating one or more random codes; and

combining the one or more random codes with a non-random code.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45, wherein combining the one or more random codes with a non-random code is selected from the group consisting of concatenating the non-random code to an end of the random code, concatenating the non-random code to a beginning of the random code and interposing the non-random code within the random code.

47. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the step of examining goods further comprises the steps of:

decrypting the code associated with each of the goods; and

determining whether the goods are authentic based on the decrypted code.

48. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the step of reading the code comprises scanning the code.

49. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the step of evaluating the decrypted code comprises determining whether the decrypted code contains the non-random portion of the combination codes.

50. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 49, wherein the step of determining whether the decrypted code contains the non-random portion comprises visually inspecting the decrypted code.

51. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the step of evaluating the decrypted code comprises comparing the decrypted code to the non-random portion of the combination codes.

52. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 51, further comprising the step of determining whether the combination code has been previously used if the random portion matches a portion of the decrypted code.

53.   (Previously Presented) A method of verifying the authenticity of goods, comprising the steps of:

generating one or more combination codes, wherein each combination code has a random portion and a non-random portion;

encrypting the one or more combination codes;

associating the encrypted combination codes with one or more goods, wherein each of the goods has a unique encrypted combination code; and

examining goods to verify whether they are authentic, wherein examining the goods comprises:

reading the code associated with one of the one or more goods;

decrypting the code;

evaluating the decrypted code to verify whether the good is authentic, and

wherein the method further includes detecting a diversion of goods from a desired channel or channels of distribution, wherein each desired channel of distribution has a unique encryption key to perform the encryption of the combination codes, and wherein examining of the goods comprises verifying whether an encryption key used for encrypting the combination codes on the inspected goods within the desired channel or channels of distribution matches the encryption key which is uniquely dedicated for the desired channel or channels of distribution, thereby identifying whether a diversion of goods has occurred.

54.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, wherein the step of verifying further comprises:

inspecting the goods within the desired channel or channels of distribution;

decrypting the codes on the goods with a decryption key; and

examining the decrypted codes, thereby determining whether a diversion of goods has occurred.

55.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 54, wherein examining the decrypted codes comprises comparing the decrypted codes to the non-random portion of the combination codes, wherein a match indicates no diversion of goods.

56.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, further comprising the step generating a pair of encryption keys, wherein one key is used to encrypt combination codes and the other is used to decrypt the codes within the desired channel or channels of distribution.

57.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 56, further comprising the step of providing a manufacturer with the encryption key to encrypt combination codes.

58.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 53, further comprising the step of placing the goods into commerce after the encrypted combination codes have been associated with the goods.

59.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 54, wherein the step of inspecting the goods comprises reading the codes on the goods with a scanner.

60.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 54, wherein the step of examining the decrypted codes comprises visually examining the codes for the expected non-random portion of the combination codes.

61.   **(Canceled)**

62.   (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 61,~~ A method of verifying the authenticity of goods, comprising the steps of:

generating one or more combination codes, wherein each combination code has a random portion and a non-random portion;

encrypting the one or more combination codes;

associating the encrypted combination codes with one or more goods, wherein each of the goods has a unique encrypted combination code; and

examining goods to verify whether they are authentic, wherein examining the goods comprises:

reading the code associated with one of the one or more goods;

decrypting the code; and

evaluating the decrypted code to verify whether the good is authentic,

wherein the non-random portion includes at least a secret portion that is encrypted, and

wherein the secret portion is encrypted with a public key and can be decrypted with a corresponding private key.

63. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 62 [44], wherein the secret portion that is encrypted contains non-random portion of the combination code includes a secret encrypted portion containing tracking information.

64. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 63, A method of verifying the authenticity of goods, comprising the steps of:

generating one or more combination codes, wherein each combination code has a random portion and a non-random portion;

encrypting the one or more combination codes;

associating the encrypted combination codes with one or more goods, wherein each of the goods has a unique encrypted combination code; and

examining goods to verify whether they are authentic, wherein examining the goods comprises:

reading the code associated with one of the one or more goods;

decrypting the code; and

evaluating the decrypted code to verify whether the good is authentic, and

wherein the non-random portion of the combination code includes a secret encrypted portion containing tracking information, and

wherein examining the goods comprises:

decrypting the combination code; and

decrypting the secret portion of the decrypted combination code to determine the tracking information.

65. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 64 [44], wherein associating the encrypted combination codes with one or more goods comprises applying the encrypted combination codes to the one or more goods.

66. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 64 [44], wherein examining the goods comprises:

determining whether the code when decrypted matches a prescribed code; and

indicating whether the matched prescribed code is a duplicate based on the determination.

67.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim <u>64</u> [44], wherein examining the goods comprises:

determining whether the code when decrypted matches a prescribed code; and

indicating that a counterfeit has been detected if the prescribed code is a duplicate.

68-86. (Canceled)

87.   (Previously Presented) A method of preparing authenticating indicia for items, comprising

composing a plurality of combination codes, each including a unique random portion and a non-random portion, and wherein the non-random portion is non-random portion includes at least a secret portion that is encrypted,

encrypting the combination codes, and

further comprising applying the encrypted combination codes to goods for use to determine whether a required tax or duty has been paid.

88-93. (Canceled)

94.   (Previously Presented) A method of checking authentication of an item identified by a respective encrypted combination code of a plurality of encrypted combination codes, each combination code including a unique random portion and a non-random portion, and wherein the non-random portion includes at least a secret portion that is encrypted, comprising

checking the decrypted combination code to determine whether the non-random portion is correct,

said checking comprising viewing the non-random portion of the decrypted combination code to determine whether it is the same as the non-random portion used to compose the combination code.

95.   (Previously Presented) A method of checking authentication of an item identified by a respective encrypted combination code of a plurality of encrypted combination codes, each combination code including a unique random portion and a

non-random portion, and wherein the non-random portion includes at least a secret portion that is encrypted, comprising

checking the decrypted combination code to determine whether the non-random portion is correct, and

if at the checking step the non-random portion is correct, the method further comprising further checking the decrypted combination code to determine whether the random portion of the decrypted combination code is unique.

96.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 95, further comprising storing in a database or the like the random portions of respective combination codes and an indication of whether such random portion already has been encountered as part of an encrypted combination code identified with a respective item, said further checking comprising determining whether the random portion of a decrypted combination code has already been encountered, thus indicating non-uniqueness of such random portion.

100.   (Previously Presented) A method of using coded information, comprising obtaining a random code intended to be coupled with a further non-random code, obtaining a non-random code including at least a secret portion that is encrypted to be readable (decrypted properly) only by use of a private key, combining the non-random code with the random code to obtain a combination code; encrypting the combination code; applying the encrypted combination code or associating it with an object, item, good, program, etc.; and verifying authenticity of the object, etc. or of some characteristic of the object, etc. by decrypting that which was encrypted, including decrypting the secret portion by a private key.

101.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 100, said decrypting including decrypting the combination code using a public key and subsequently decrypting the secret portion using a private key.

102-111. (Canceled)